THE SEAWALL SPECTER.

A CHRISTMAS FANTASY.

[By Lily Curry.]

PART I.—THE APPARITION.

The night was one of those splendid, steel-white marvels of the wintry world. The full moon, early risen, stood forth in calm dominion over the Haldon hills; the sigh of the sea was hushed below the old seawall. And from every window, throughout the village, in sheltered hollow or up the sandy slope of the hill and far and wide upon its summit, glad home lights were twinkling, unabashed by the vaster radiance without, while now and then the music rang clear on the stillness of the night, the cheery melody of kindling and thankful hearts. For once again the season was at hand when strife should cease; when wrong should be forgiven, spite forgotten; when the angels in heaven should sing with wild joy over a new-born tenderness on earth. It was Christmas eve in the old Devonshire town.

But there was one heart which neither sang nor kindled; one soul which turned aside enshrouded in the bitterness of its own knowledge. In a private parlor of the town's main inn, cheerless place at best, a young man moved restlessly to and fro—a handsome fellow whose years might perhaps have numbered twenty-six or seven, and whose manner suggested haughtiness. There was another occupant of the room—an elderly gentleman, who, though still seated and reclining in the rudest possible conception of an easy chair, held an overcoat and hat as if intending shortly to set out upon a journey. There was little resemblance between the two; the elder was fair, with delicate features and thinish gray-yellow hair, while the young man's countenance showed a strength and darkness indicative of Southern blood and passion. Young Maurice Du Vivier had inherited little save the lofty pride of his beautiful English mother. Perhaps his uncle—for such in fact was the elder—bore this in mind as he spoke again, addressing his young companion in the suave, easeful voice of titled birth.

"There is yet time, Maurice," he said. "There is a quarter of an hour before the train leaves. Reconsider and go home with me: you will meet a number of agreeable people at Grantley Manor. Your cousin Evelyn will be glad to know you after all these years. You were but a mere child when your poor mother last brought you to see us. And surely you can look to your business here quite as well a fortnight later. It's a poor notion to spend one's Christmas in such a fashion."

Shaking his head, the other replied in a voice of mingled sweetness and bitterness—the latter in preponderance;

"Thank you again, Sir Reginald; but I am hardly in a fit mood for meeting any one. By and by, perhaps, but not at present. Christmas is no more to me now than any other day, and I am as comfortable in one spot as in another." He paused a little, then resumed with the constraint of sudden recollection. "It was exceedingly kind of you to call upon me, coming out of your way as you did, I assure you I am grateful. * * * But I think I'd better remain and look after my property interests here."

Sir Reginald arose, not disturbed apparently by his nephew's declining the invitation. A slender gentleman of low stature and graceful carriage, he preserved as a rule a continuous, sweet placidity of countenance. And this had remained unchanged, save as a faint smile flickered around his lips.

"I am sorry you will not come," he said kindly. "And I am sorry that you are feeling so down-hearted. I think that I should like to know the name of the American miss who is responsible for it. Your stay in the states was unfortunate in this respect. By the by, there is a young woman from New York even now our guest at Grantley; a new friend of Evelyn, a thoroughly charming and beautiful creature. Indeed, if I were a little younger myself—" the suave voice ceased and the baronet cleared his throat significantly. But Du Vivier only turned and crossed the room, with the gait of futile, feverish impatience, then he recrossed back and took the coat from his uncle's hands to assist that gentleman in putting it on. A moment later the fly was announced and the baronet took his leave.

Left alone, Du Vivier flung himself down in the armchair, burying his face in his hands. Wretched beyond description—that was his mental status! Why could he not forget it all? Why could he not put her forever from his heart? Why must he continue to be tortured by recollections of the beautiful young face he should see no more? Why must her personality remain vivid, insistent upon his soul's personality?

Esme! At that name what vision floated before his closed eyes?

A splendid face, cream-white against its blue-black circling hair, with noble brow and lips that might have kissed to death some crimson-stained flower! A marvelous form and some strange trick of speech or glance that set one's heart throbbing in mad, inexplicable fashion! The bearing of a young princess—imperious at times, at times radiantly gracious. For she was no less proud than himself—with a righteous sort of pride in her own youth and beauty and parentage. Was she not a Van Nostrand, a daughter of old Knickerbocker stock? And could she not trace back upon her mother's side to a certain noble ancestor, whose daughter, Lady Esme Glaston, she was named after and said to closely resemble?

Du Vivier's brain teemed with these and a thousand kindred recollections. The most vivid and engrossing was the recollection of that last night—their last meeting—in the conservatory of her father's New York mansion. It hardly seemed as if the space of months, the width of an ocean, intervened. Just the old story of coquetry, passion, shattered faith and a jealous heart lashing itself into a wild, wild fury from the depths of which words were spoken that should never be forgiven or forgotten. Burning, terrible words. Ah! that last night in the conservatory when his brain seemed whirling and music mocked him from the distant ball room, as with heaving breast and flashing eyes she spoke the one word, "Go!" After all his love, after all they had vowed to each other, they should part to meet no more forever!

Forever! what a weary, weary word!

And so it had come that Maurice Du Vivier must sit alone with his own unhappiness in a cheerless parlor of that country inn, on Christmas eve of all the year!

The intensity of the gloom which pressed upon him must have proven exhausting; his head sank still lower, his eyes were closed and his fingers thrust hard into his ears, as if to shut out every sight or sound.

He remained in this attitude for some considerable time—perhaps one hour, perhaps several—he was not positive afterwards. Then, though he had not stirred, he became conscious of a strange alteration in the surrounding atmosphere, almost as if, through a window flung suddenly open, a steel-cold wind force came rushing in to pervade and possess the room. Then this pervading and possessing force seemed gradually to gather itself up, to concentrate and resolve itself into something which, though yet intangible, had shape and form and capability of motion. For it seemed to advance slowly and hover above him in mysterious outline. And curiously he felt neither fear nor awe, but pressing his fingers the harder in his ears remained motionless.

And now the hovering presence at his side seemed slowly to increase in might and irresistibility. Human or superhuman—which was it? He felt no mortal body, but ever a mighty impelling influence, as if a whirlwind of air were about drawing him up out of his hopeless attitude into itself.

He shivered when a cold breath trembled on his cheek and on the hand that partly shaded it. The flickering draught was something strange beyond description. It seemed to grow upon him as having sense and purpose; to penetrate his existence, to interrogate and compel reply.

"You are unhappy?" it questioned.

And suddenly he found himself replying, though without word or sound.

"I am wretched."

The cold draught thrilled him swiftly a second time.

"Yet she is not far away, and you will meet again."

Du Vivier groaned.

"Never! She is farther off than the stars. * * * And I loved her."

"Aye," the breath made answer. "'Twas even so that Lady Esme loved Lord Arthur. You remember how she flung herself into the sea that night when she knew him false?"

Du Vivier now experienced a painful sense of mental confusion; what was this which he could but partially recall? What was this which eluded and evaded clearest recollection?

"Lady Esme," he replied slowly, "Lady Esme lived more than a century ago. What was I to her."

"Nay," the breath sighed vaguely. "It was Lord Arthur Grantley then; what was he to Lady Esme? Would you know? The old seawall is yet unchanged since Esme Glaston walked there with her lover. The sea creeps at its base, the tide comes and goes, and ghosts of love slain long ago by foul unfaith shall come and go forever. * * * But you shall see and hear it all again upon this night of nights! * * * Come, then; come away—away and out into the moonlight and down to the sea."

Du Vivier recoiled, shivering anew and inwardly resisting.

"Come away!" The whisper of the breath was urgent, strenuous. "Come away, out into the night and down to the sea."

And by degrees he felt himself drawn up and out of his chair until he stood erect, save that his head was bowed, his eyes still closed, and his hands pressed hard upon his hearing.

Even in this fashion the two passed slowly, noiselessly from the room and out into the quiet of the old town fast settling to its slumber; even in this fashion they passed unhindered down the hill slope, the nameless presence in advance, the mortal following after, with eyes still closed and ears fast guarded. On through the steel-white beauty of the night, while others slept perchance, or knelt in the light of glad hearth fires, or singing tender hymns.

In the light which fell like a silver veil upon the old seawall the two walked slowly. It was the same old promenade that Esme Glaston and Lord Grantley trod 100 years before, plighting vows of eternal constancy—the one's to prove as true as heaven, the other's false as hell!

Maurice Du Vivier, following with blind obedience as the nameless force might lead, now felt himself growing strangely helpless. Nor dared he pause or loiter, though the keen air and the deepening wave-murmur told more and more of seaward progress. Vainly he strove to utter words of remonstrance. "Silence," the presence whispered, "silence and follow, and you shall know it as it was."

But ever the air grew keener, the sea murmur louder, and Maurice Du Vivier's heart beat faster as his sense of helplessness increased. Whither was he being led, and to what awful fate? The beating of his heart seemed to kindle a fire which slowly stole up through every artery to his brain and there fed furiously upon the wild fancies and conjectures of the soul. Fantastic visions danced before his closed eyes; he could see many images darting wildly hither and thither. Sometimes he saw himself in peril—upon the verge of a precipice or struggling in the sea. Then again he was back in his quiet parlor at the inn speaking with his uncle, the baronet. Then his own image vanished and he saw instead a woman's face, perfect though somewhat pale, with eyes like huge sapphires, and drooping childish mouth. It was the face of Esme, his beloved, and a voice began to din in his ears that he had been too harsh, too swift in accusing; that he had been too passionate to hearken to explanation. "Unjust, unjust!" it cried. Then another change was swiftly wrought. All fire and throbbing ceased. Something like cloud or mist seemed to close about and settle upon him, dense and stifling. He felt the strength desert his limbs; they trembled until he could no longer stand, but sank upon his knees. He felt the close presence of the spirit. Once again he strove to speak, to plead for release, but something seemed to clutch like a mighty hand at his throat, and the beating of his heart therewith to swell to an enormous power, which shook and rent him fiercely, until he could only gasp and throw his arms up wildly, and with louder noises rushing torrent-like upon his undefended hearing, fall forward upon the stones to lie as one dead.

[To be concluded in Sunday's Gazette.]

man, for instance, who has drawn half a square, goes around to find the lady who has drawn a similar pattern, and who when found becomes his partner at that particular table on which lies a square. In like manner two other players are selected for the same table, making the usual euchre party of four. The table on which lies a circle obtains its sitters in a similar way, as do also the tables on which are lying the remaining figures referred to above. The table nearest the front door is said to be at the head of the row, and the corresponding one at the other end of the room is said to be at the foot. The players being thus seated four at a table, one of those at the head table strikes a bell, and the game begins. Everybody plays as fast as he or she can, and the excitement is great until the sound of the bell announces that a couple at the head table have finished their game. Immediately all the other players stop playing, and the winners at each table change places and take the table next above them, the ultimate object being to get to the head table. The losing couple at the head table go down to the foot, and at every table the partners change, so that your partner in the previous round becomes your enemy in the round now beginning.

The delightful haste and confusion caused by this sudden change and energetic effort to advance are accompanied by much laughter, and the spirit of competition is soon in full swing. The couple at the head table, who have won a game, take from a small box, containing wafers in the shape of red stars, one of the stars and stick it to their card to indicate the fact of their triumph. The more stars any player has on his card, the more successes he has won. But the couple who lose at the lowest table of all are compelled to indicate their disgrace by affixing to their card half of a little red paper seal like that adjoining signatures in legal documents. The more of these wafers or seals any couple has, the greater is the ill-repute.

The game continues in this way until the time previously chosen by the host or hostess has expired. This time is usually about two hours and a half, when the final reckoning is taken and the prizes are awarded. To the lady and gentleman who have won the most points a prize apiece is awarded, and this may be of any description or cost, although good taste seems to dictate that its pecuniary value be not large. To the lady and gentleman, on the other hand, who have lost the most while sitting at the lowest table, and on whose card, therefore, is the greatest number of half-seals, a mock prize apiece is awarded, consisting, say, of a cheap doll fantastically dressed, or other ludicrous exponent of unsuccessful speeches. A representation of these prizes dancing may follow, or the game may be renewed. Most young people, however, prefer to close the evening with some fresh sport.

Which, being suffered, rivers cannot quench.

Procrastination may rob you of time, but by increased diligence you can make up the loss; but if it rob you of life, the loss is irremediable. If your health is delicate, your appetite fickle, your sleep broken, your mind depressed, your whole being out of sorts, depend on it you are seriously diseased. In all such cases Dr. Pierce's "Golden Medical Discovery" will speedily effect a genuine, radical cure—make a new man of you and save you from the tortures of lingering disease.

CHEAP INK.

A Substance Discovered Near Hot Springs Which Dissolved Makes Writing Fluid.

Special to the Gazette.

HOT SPRINGS, ARK., Dec. 24.—The fact appears too much like cheap fiction to be thus chronicled, yet it is literally true, that to-day a man prospecting for minerals discovered an immense deposit of a substance which dissolves readily in water and makes a first-class writing fluid. It is a black, stony-looking substance which is easily powdered and needs no other ingredient except water to be ready for use as a writing ink, or for dyeing purposes. Your reporter has both seen and tested this new discovery, and it is pronounced wonderful by all who have seen it.

PROGRESSIVE EUCHRE.

Something About the Amusement Now Growing in Favor.

The fascination of progressive euchre is that which, to some persons, belongs to ordinary euchre, and consists in the briskness and range of the competition, as well as in the merriment and physical activity which it invariably provokes. In order to give a just idea of the game let us describe a particular instance in which it was played with success, not because this instance is in any respect remarkable, but because, being a fair average one, it will represent many others. The host or hostess, then, standing in the drawing-room in the presence of, say, twelve, sixteen or twenty ladies and gentlemen who have been invited for the evening, holds in one hand a number of pieces of pasteboard to be drawn successively by the ladies, and in the other hand a similar number to be drawn by the gentlemen. Suppose the number of players is sixteen, or four at each one of four small tables which have been placed diagonally across the room, and on each of which has been laid a card representing one of four geometrical figures, say a square or a circle, a parallelogram, or an octagon. Each of these cards has two duplicates, which, after being cut in two, are held for distribution in the hand of the host or hostess. The ladies proceed to select each a piece from eight pieces held out to them, the gentlemen select in like manner from another eight held out to them, and the fun begins by their attempting to match the pieces so selected. A gentle-